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MAPS offers summer program

The MAPS Media Institute in Hamilton has expanded its after-school media arts program into the summer months. For the first time in its 11-year history, this nationally awarded nonprofit will stay open all summer and provide 10 weeks of media arts classes, free-of-charge, to any student in grades 8-12 in Ravalli County.

With this program, MAPS now serves students five days a week and throughout the entire year.

MAPS is fully funded by the Irwin and Florence Rosten Foundation, a non-profit, with continued support from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, the 21st Century Learning Centers and the Montana Arts Council.

For more information, visit the MAPS website at mapsmediainstitute.com.

ARTS EDUCATION

Missoula teen wins Poetry Out Loud state title

Willard Alternative High School senior Taylor Rodgers earned a trip to the nation's capital to represent Montana at the 10th Poetry Out Loud National Finals with recitations of poems by Walt Whitman, Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath.

Rodgers won on her first try competing in the state finals, only hearing about Poetry Out Loud after being given an assignment to memorize and recite a poem for her English class. Her teacher, Lisa Waller, will accompany Taylor to the National Finals, April 27-29 in Washington, DC.

Poetry Out Loud is sponsored by the Montana Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. Rodgers will compete at the national level for scholarships up to \$20,000, as well as a library of poetry books for her school.

Nineteen Montana high school students competed in the 2015 State Finals, held March 13 at Grandstreet Theatre in Helena. Second place went to Taylor Blossom from Capital High School in Helena, and third place went to Lena Babcock from Thompson Falls High School.

Judges for this year's competition included



Top competitors at this year's Poetry Out Loud contest, shown at left, are: (left to right) second place winner Taylor Blossom, Capital High School; first place winner Taylor Rodgers, Willard Alternative High School; and third place winner Lena Babcock, Thompson Falls High School.

Poetry Out Loud judges and coordinators, pictured below, include (left to right): Mark Gibbons, Jennifer Finley, Margaret Belisle, Roger Dunsmore, Lowell Jaeger and Jonna Swartz.

(Photos by Cheri Thornton)

Mark Gibbons, Lowell Jaeger, Jennifer Finley, Laura Brayko and Roger Dunsmore.

Special recognition was also given to Poetry Out Loud state coordinator Margaret Belisle, who is ending her tenure after 10 years with the program. Belisle was honored by her many friends and colleagues during the state finals with a surprise recitation of her favorite poem, "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe.



Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child

By Lori Gray and John Combs
Reprinted with permission from Montana Music Educators Association *Cadenza* magazine, January 2015

Any Given Child is a national initiative of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC; to increase equitable access to the arts for all students in K-8 schools. Missoula is the 13th community in the nation selected to partner with the Kennedy Center to implement the Any Given Child Program in Missoula County Public Schools.

A Community Arts Team was formed over a year ago and it includes the mayor, the Missoula County Public Schools' superintendent, business leaders, philanthropic organizations, MCPS teachers and administrators, representatives from Missoula arts organizations, university arts professors and administrators, and artists from the areas of dance, literary arts, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts.

This past year, the Community Arts Team examined the current arts programs within the Missoula County Public Schools and identified the missing arts experiences for each school K-8. Now that the assessment has been completed, a coalition of funders, anchored by a \$150,000 contribution from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation over the next three years, have joined to support this program.

The power of the Any Given Child initiative has been its ability to focus the entire community on arts education for the children of Missoula County Public Schools. People and organizations that weren't used to working with each other gathered under the banner of the Kennedy Center to make a change for the better.

Tom Bensen, executive director of the Missoula Cultural Council and director of the Any Given Child Missoula Governing Board explained, "the cooperative spirit of Missoula's Community Arts Team has been among the most powerful elements of this process, and bodes well for the success of Any Given Child as we move forward."

Among the positive results we have noticed are the new lines of communication used to share passion for arts education and information throughout the Missoula arts community. "Any Given Child initiative is an incredible opportunity for Missoula,"

said Karen Kaufmann, dance professor from the UM School of Theatre and Dance and director of the Creative Pulse interdisciplinary arts graduate program. "With Missoula's artists and arts organizations in partnership with MCPS, our students are going to be experiencing all the arts throughout their K-8 education. This is an example of excellent vision and leadership in the arts and education."

Teachers and administrators in Missoula are already making arts integration a priority within their schools and classrooms. Cindy Christensen, principal at Russell Elementary,

Perhaps the most exciting accomplishment to date was the development of the executive director position for Any Given Child Missoula. Chris Neely from Corvallis, OR, has accepted the position. She is passionate about the Any Given Child initiative and brings with her knowledge and experience in arts integration and program development for arts organizations, and also a deep understanding of the work conducted by the Any Given Child team in Portland.

"This initiative has the capability of placing Missoula on the forefront of innovative and creative education as well as the possibility of creating a national model of success," she said. "It is important to remember that the arts not only have the ability to spark a passion for learning, but they also have incredible power to transform and save lives."

We hope to get all of Missoula and eventually Montana behind this inspiring initiative. The shared vision to improve the lives of children through the arts motivates us to remain active, welcome our new executive director, and share our dream of an equitable and accessible arts education for all students in Montana.

As the information about the Any Given Child Missoula initiative and the transformational evidence continues to grow, we expect

to see a gravitational pull towards the importance of arts education ... It has been exciting to see our community come to the realization that it will take a dedicated effort to realize our Any Given Child Missoula mission statement: The arts are essential. All Missoula County Public Schools (K-8) students must have equal access to diverse arts learning opportunities that inspire curiosity, communication, and creativity.

Visit the MCPS website to read more about Any Given Child Missoula and to watch the AGC Missoula video: mcpsmt.org/domain/2465.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts also offers more information: www.kennedy-center.org/education/any-givenchild/.

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Third graders dance with CoMotion Dance Project members during a performance of "Fire Speaks the Land" sponsored by the Any Given Child Initiative. (Photo by Tom Bauer/courtesy of the Missoulian)

notes that while observing teachers who are integrating the arts into their curriculum, "I have observed a huge transformation in student behavior. All students, even those who struggle the most, are actively and enthusiastically engaged in hands-on learning. They are making greater connections to the curriculum and developing a deeper understanding of the world around them."

Although Missoula has a strong history of music programs in the schools, the arts team discovered that the arts are not equally represented within and across schools in the district. During the first year as the team worked with Kennedy Center representatives, we used survey and mapping tools to gather data on current arts programs and to bring to light the gaps throughout the district.

The data not only gave us a clear picture of the needs in K-8 arts education, but also inspired the team members representing arts organizations as they reflected upon what arts experiences they could provide to the schools in the near future.